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NASHVILLE - The Senate this morning approved legislation extending jobless benefits. In an 85-9 vote, the Senate approved a recession relief package; part of that package temporarily extends unemployment benefits up to 13 weeks. The House passed the bill Thursday, 417-3. Now both the House and the Senate send the bill to President Bush and he has announced he will sign it.

In Tennessee, the new bill will affect approximately 37,000 people. The legislation provides that the federal government will pay 100 percent of the costs to extend the benefits. The money will not be drawn from Tennessee's unemployment trust fund.

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development is currently reviewing files to determine who may be eligible and will notify these individuals by mail. No one will be required to come into his or her local Labor and Workforce Development Office or Career Center. Once the individual receives an application in the mail they can submit their claim through the mail if they are still unemployed. Individuals who are determined eligible should expect to receive their first temporary extended unemployment compensation payment in 2 to 3 weeks.

Governor Don Sundquist is expected to sign off on the legislation this weekend. Sundquist said, "I'm pleased congress has passed legislation that will continue to assist individuals during a difficult time in their lives as they are looking for a new job. I'm confident our Department of Labor and Workforce Development is promptly working to get benefits to those who need it."

Department of Labor and Workforce Development Commissioner Michael Magill said, "This legislation is an opportunity for Tennessee to assist those throughout the state that have been affected by the economic downturn over the past year. This is an important and encouraging measure to help our citizens who need it most."

The Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development is an equal opportunity employer. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

El Departamento del Trabajo y Desarrollo de la Fuerza Laboral de Tennessee es un patrono que ofrece igualdad de empleo. Ayudas auxiliares están disponibles para individuos con impedimentos.